and Forests. The physical verifications, investigations and subsequent action to decide the cases were taken by the Special Investigation Team (SIT).

(b) Out of 9580 cubic meter timber found during physical verifications in these wagons, 5102 cubic meter timber was found to be illegal. No upset price was fixed at the time of detention of wagon.

(c) and (d) The SIT had taken value of the timber as Rs. 10,000/- per cubic meter for imposing penalties. An amount of Rs. 6.09 crores has been recovered by the SIT towards penalties and sale of confiscated timber.

(e) An amount of Rs. 0.17 crores has been spent by SIT till date on physical verifications and sale of confiscated timber.

(f) The timber has been sold on "as is where is basis" as per the accepted practice of conducting sale of such timber.

Cultivation of Cotton

5169. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the cotton growers in North India are reluctant to cultivate the hybrid varieties of cotton and they will not be able to grow Bt. (Bacillus thuringiensis) cotton this season;

(b) whether the farmers are reluctant to cultivate of hybrid varieties as the hybrids in use have now lost all their potency; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to encourage cultivation of cotton?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. The cotton growers in North India are not reluctant to cultivate the hybrid varieties of cotton. So far no Bt. Cotton hybrids have been approved for release in the Northern region.

(c) Central Cotton Research Institute, Nagpur and Indian Council of Agricultural Research under the All India Coordinated Cotton Improvement Project are entrusted with cotton research and development work for recommending suitable hybrids for various agro-climatic areas.

ECO-Clubs in Karnataka

5170. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of eco-clubs which have, so far, been started in Karnataka;

(b) the amount released during 2001-02 and 2002-03 for the functioning of these clubs;

(c) the number of Government and private schools in Karnataka which have been identified by the district level committees for setting up these eco-clubs;

(d) whether there is any proposal to set up more number of eco-clubs in Karnataka during 2003-04; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) 2128 eco-clubs have started functioning in Karnataka under the National Green Corps programme.

(b) Rs 24.33 lakhs during 2001-02 and Rs 15.34 lakhs during 2002-03 were released under the programme to Karnataka.

(c) 1641 Government Schools and 487 private schools are participating in the programme.

(d) and (e) 572 more eco-clubs are to be set up in Karnataka taking the total number of eco-clubs in the State to 2700.

Forest Cover in Assam

5171. SHRI URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the forest cover in Assam is drastically decreasing against its increase in the country;

(b) if so, details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that there is a great paucity of funds in the State forest department to maintain the forest properly; and

(d) if so, the steps taken by the Centre in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) and (b) According to the State of Forest Report, 2001 the forest cover of Assam is 27,714 sq. km. as against 23,688 sq. km. reported in the previous report of 1999.

(c) Subject to availability of financial resources, the State of Assam have been providing funds for forest conservation and development.

(d) The Central Government have been providing funds to the State of Assam under various ongoing Central Sponsored Schemes for identified works of forest conservation and development.